

THE

HUM

Printed

THE IRON PONY

AND OTHER RHYMES,

HUMOROUS AND SATIRICAL.

BY

JOHN SHEPMINSTER.



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PREFACE.

A short performance needs but a prologue brief,
And as I hold the opinion or belief,
Prose prefaces to verse are oft unread,
You here have one in measured words instead.

As craftsmen show their varied work for sale,
I offer mine, in satire—simple tale;
Declaring it has always been my wish
To serve no bitterness in first named dish.
Throughout there are some blemishes I know,
Or say defects, and may be errors too.
For these just *now* indulgence is desired,
(The hand and brain will both sometimes grow tired)
And in extenuation let me plead—
In mitigation also, if there's need,
Conditions under which my lines were writ
Were not propitious to evoking wit.

No weak complaints 'gainst Providence or Fate,
Have I the least intention here to state;
The reader's but desired to bear in mind
What in this simple metaphor he'll find;
Too oft, when aid from muse I would call forth,
I've found the aspect of my situation *North*.
Of this enough; if well received my song
The reader and my verse will meet again ere long.

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THE IRON PONY.

Suggestions of change in cavalry service. · Dedicated to the
Hon. M. Caron, Minister of Militia.

I.

..... 5 The railway engine, sir, as all well know,
..... 21 Is called the Iron Horse, and if 'tis "go"
..... 28 That's caused the useful thing to be so named,
This nomenclature is not to be blamed.
But while thus far the steed is superseded,
For speed and draught combined, at times much needed,
No metal substitute has yet been found
To save him in a charge from gash or wound.
In olden times 'tis true he was secured,
In parts at least from cut and thrust of sword;
Where all exposed in front he often wore
Stout armour in the tourney or at war.
Besides, no knight or trooper worth the name,
Would ever wilfully, of purpose, maim
The noble animal that bore his foe;
His aim was but to lay the rider low.
Since then great changes have occurred in war,
The arms used now are not just what they were;
The deadly tubes that throw cold iron or lead
Make no distinction 'tween the man and steed:
On both alike destruction's hurled around,
While mangled, dying, man and horse bestrew the ground.
To mitigate these ills in future times
Is here attempted in these homely rhymes.

II.

Through quiet country roads on summer eves,
 Or later in the season, when the leaves
 Have changed their green for purple, orange, yellow;
 When flowers are fading, fruits are growing mellow;
 The ancient dame on way to house of prayer,
 Or perhaps returning to her household care,
 Of late has sometimes felt alarm or start,
 That caused the pulse to quicken at the heart.
 Swift, as if borne by gallant racing steed,
 A form has passed her on the road with speed;
 The apparition or whate'er it was,
 As seen through pebble spectacles or glass,
 A certain space was high above the road—
 No foot of horse or man on earth there trod.
 And yet no means of motion had she seen
 Besides a little flash of silvery sheen,
 That to her failing sight did merely seem
 A glimmering through the trees of bright moonbeam.
 Arrived at length all weary at her home,
 Her story as above went round the room;
 Was heard by all with wonder and attention,
 With ears wide open, necks at fullest tension;
 When one, with face pale as a snowclad icicle,
 Exclaimed, "Why, grandma, 'twas a boy and bicycle."

III.

The flash, or sheen, that to the dame appeared
 An apparition, ghost, or spectre weird,
 'Tis here proposed to utilize in war
 For mounted troops, instead of horse or mare
 The Iron Pony, sir, it may be named,
 The horse being as you know already claimed.
 To be effective it must be well built,
 It may be handsome too—no need of gilt—
 And part for ornament, in front we'll place
 The lion, king of beasts of warlike race;

Though some may here object, why not the beaver,
He's all our own, industrious and clever;
Most true, but as a symbol picturing war,
Ill suited to the character I fear;
Still, that our patriotism you may rely on,
We'll leave a place for him beside the lion.
And part for ornament above 'tis said:
Direct and level from the lion's head,
For use, there must project straight out in front
A weapon for attack, strong, keen, (not blunt)
In shape or fashion like a spear or horn,
As had the old time fabled unicorn.
This weapon, jutting from the lion's head,
Will serve the purpose of attack instead
Of sabre, or the cumbrous lance or spear;
Though as the enemy, the charge draws near,
The lion's aim may now and then prove wide,
It is intended always to provide
The force with firearms handy at the side.

IV.

No great invention ever yet was made,
From printing presses to a razor blade,
But met opponents to decry its worth;
'Twould be impracticable, and so forth.
One fault we know is certain to be found
In our Iron Pony, otherwise all sound;
However firm and staunch in motion set,
When halting, it will scarcely keep its feet.
The objection does we own contain some weight,
The answer with all brevity we'll state;
The coming Iron Pony, out of bicycle,
Will have another wheel, will be a tricycle.
The question also may be put, what gain
Can be expected from this novel plan?
When other nations will be free to use
The very system that we here propose.

Some force there is in this well timed objection,
 But 'tis forestalled, as after due reflection
 We deemed it prudent to consult a friend,
 Desiring of him his best aid to lend.
 This friend, a member of the Peace Society
 Whose aims are marked by judgment, sense, propriety
 Assures us 'tis resolved to organize
 A scheme that the whole world shall recognize :
 A universal grand association,
 To settle all disputes by arbitration ;
 And that, 'tis also held in contemplation
 To set up a great court of registration,
 Where all inventions of wide application
 May be on file, protected from invasion.
 That while opposed to every sort of war,
 As members of this corporation are ;
 Yet, as our system is a mitigation,
 Of pain or suffering 'mong the brute creation,
 They think our plan deserves to be protected,
 And guarantee our rights shall be respected.

V.

The change will prove a saving, that's of course,
 Just as a pony costs less than a horse :
 Besides the lesser price of our new steed,
 You'll note the important fact, he'll want no feed
 Releasing thus vast quantities of forage,
 Of which the Celt and Gael can make their porridge.
 The cereal to which we here allude,
 You know by them is highly prized as food ;
 Though evil tongues have said (Lord, how men lie),
 That in these regions they prefer the rye.
 The cost, however, is not all the gain
 To be effected by our novel plan ;
 The pains our equine friends in war endure,
 For which no humane rider knows a cure,
 By our invention are near all prevented—

The horse's business in a charge is ended.
The soldier's trade indeed, may sometimes dull,
Or cloud the finer feelings of the soul ;
But still the humblest private of the force
Is pained at sight of suffering of his horse ;
Adopt the change proposed by our new plan,
No harrowing sight of steed but partly slain,
In torture lingering, dying on the plain ;
For gallant bearing through the toils of hottest fray,
To that black scavenger, the buzzard, left a prey.

VI.

So much, sir, is premised of our new steed,
For further changes though we have much need :
The forest of tall maples, green or sere,
Needs arms to wield the axe instead of spear ;
The rolling prairie wide extended broad,
Needs hands to hold the plough and not the sword ;
Henceforth our hardy sons we may release
From toils of war, parade or drill in peace ;
The substitution that we have in view,
As well as horse, releases rider too ;
The mandate to " replenish and subdue."
The earth may now receive all honour due.

VII.

If then the hardy riders we displace,
By whom is it proposed to fill their place ;
The plan when heard may cause a smile (no laugh)
Of all the race, you know that man's but half ;
" Lord of creation " though he's called in pride,
He may remember women too can ride ;
When man's dismounted, citizens and churls,
Say, can you tell, why not set up the girls ?

VIII.

Much talk, and not a little printer's ink,
With large potations of an Eastern drink,
Have been expended over wordy fights,
Enforcing or defending woman's rights.
It is asserted, in set terms averred,
That half the human race are all debarred
From certain occupations or professions ;
From theatres, in hospitals, law sessions ;
From helping carve fine subjects into pieces,
Or sheep, by legal clippers lose their fleeces ;
All these, with certain ills of politic and state,
We are informed our sisters wish us to abate.

IX.

Your claims, my injured friends, we grant at once,
Of your pretensions do not bate an ounce ;
The opposition that your souls doth vex,
From men, and some old women the same sex,
Is too well known, and what these people fear,
Is that your perseverance, skill, may bear
The laurel from their brow ; the snug, warm seat
May have to be surrendered in defeat.
To show you that with your views we coincide,
'Tis here proposed in full to set aside
For you, one branch of military art,
In all which only bearded folk take part.
Objections may be made to this concession,
That what we yield is not worth your possession ;
That war, with all its hardships, is unfit
For woman's tender nature, no way meet,
That less than manhood's strength can not be found
Sufficient in the field to hold the ground.
The first objection is not answered here,
In proper place it will be made appear,
A thousand maidens will soon volunteer
To join the force ; no pressing will be needed,

No invitation will be passed unheeded,
 The next objection may be fairly met,
 The strength our troops require lies in the feet.
 The scene that one may witness every day,
 At social party, hop, or ball, or play,
 Where fragile forms disport their limber heels.
 The question settles; the observer feels
 That all such nimble, dextrous, pretty feet
 May be relied on in advance or for retreat.
 Philosophers and bookish men may say
 The mode of living of the present day
 Has rendered woman weakly, all unfit,
 The dangers, hardships of the field to meet.
 To these well meaning men we make reply,
 On theories we do not much rely,
 The men of action, both in peace and war,
 Who know what women and gunpowder are —
 Your pardon, ladies, for the terms we use,
 The haste to rhyme with war is our excuse;
 No satire on one's temper was intended,
 And if not liked, next issue we can mend it —
 All these are well informed of woman's merit,
 The lack of strength may be supplied by spirit;
 And certain veteran troopers we have known,
 Who had seen some well drilled regiments overthrown,
 Had rather charge the cannon of Von Krupp,
 Than she battalions when the blood is up.

X.

The great momentous question of the claim,
 Or "rights of woman"—never mind the name—
 All being settled, 'tis our proper course
 To show the sources whence to obtain the force.
 You doubtless, sir, have seen at various times,
 Set forth in prose, or perhaps in florid rhymes,
 The yearnings of those ladies of strong mind,
 Who towards a wider sphere are well inclined;

Your tempting offers these will ne'er resist,
 By hundreds they'll be ready to enlist.
 Besides those in the class above embraced,
 Is that less numerous one, by fortune placed,
 Beyond the need of toil for daily bread—
 Born on a higher plane, gently bred,
 Whose infant mouths were fed with golden spoon,
 Instead of baser metal or plain horn.
 Amongst these favoured fair ones will be found
 Numbers dissatisfied with daily round
 Of little pleasures of our modern life—
 All with conventionality at strife.
 We feel assured, sir, these will be most eager
 To see a little of camp life or leaguer,
 If these two ranks, however, do not yield
 Sufficient numbers to place in the field,
 A larger and more numerous class exists
 Who'll be found willing to make up our lists.

XI.

In city, town, or in the rural village,
 'Midst hum of busy street or healthful tillage,
 Are seen, if not in this, in other lands,
 Unnumbered maidens ready to our hands;
 Besides young comely widows, also wives,
 Industrious as winged labourers in hives,
 In brave attempt to gain their daily bread
 From morn to night with needle and with thread.
 With all this labour, diligence or toil,
 The livelong day, or by the nightly oil,
 Such is the scant remunerative dole,
 Some scarce can keep the body joined to soul;
 The former grown so spare, attenuated
 (One might say lean, the terms are near related)
 That put them in the field where shot and shell
 Are falling quick and thick all round, pellmell,
 The chances are, ten thousand to an ace,

But few would ever find their destined place ;
No marksman yet who ever aimed at post,
Was known to hurt a shadow or a ghost ;
Here, sir, is the material we require
To stand invulnerable under fire ;
While as for numbers, you may well rely,
There never will be lack in the supply.

XII.

The term for the enrolment of the force
Will follow here in order or due course.
'Tis not proposed our ladies shall enlist
For a set term of years, by statute fixed ;
Each member shall be free from bond or thrall,
To obey, with proper notice, Hymen's call ;
Provided always, and in every case,
A substitute be found to fill her place.
The standard rule of service then shall be,
Till matrimony sets each member free ;
For 'tis as certain as decree of fate,
That every volunteer will find a mate ;
None rank or file, whatever be her grade,
Need ever fear the stigma of old maid.
The charms for which our fair are widely famed,
Through this and neighbouring lands, need but be named ;
The blending of the tribes of old world race,
Of stalwart manly form and female grace,
All aided by the stimulus of clime,
And ripened as the sure effect of time,
Have here produced a style of radiant face,
Till now, almost unknown in modern days.
Superb, however, as this beauty is,
If it be possible it will increase.
The healthful exercise in open air,
In evolutions of parade and war,
Combined with increased consciousness of worth,
That every woman will possess henceforth—

All this, with confidence we now submit,
 Is certain to enhance her beauty, wit ;
 So that when seen careering on the field,
 All hearts, unless of flint, will surely yield.
 While armed and smiling from her lofty seat,
 A thousand suitors will be at her feet ;
 The suppliants will oft be cast aside
 As all the fair relentless, onward ride.
 Relations of the sexes will be changed,
 Hymeneal matters must be rearranged ;
 The lady knowing she is more than peer
 Of man, in what he deems his proper sphere,
 May make of every day a short leap year ;
 Instead of waiting for his proffered hand,
 Imperially may issue her command.
 But should the hirsute biped fail to yield
 Obedience, she will still command the field ;
 While not outraging delicacy, may,
 At any given signal, in broad day,
 Reverse the ancient Roman-Sabine plan,
 Appropriating her own favoured man—
 In formal, autocratic tones of royalty,
 Express her wish to have a consort's loyalty.

XIII.

It must be understood—rule absolute—
 No wife will be admitted a recruit ;
 'Tis true, the husbands might be held as sureties
 For proper conduct of the absent beauties—
 Their presence home requires for other duties.
 Besides, when absent, leagues on the frontier,
 The wives might be distracted by the fear,
 That when defending hearth from scathe and evil,
 Their lords at home might play the very d——l.

XIV.

The numbers of the force being all enrolled,
 The next part in the plan we here unfold.

A few battalions in the event of war—
 For which in peace, you know, we should prepare—
 Will be required, for that most dangerous post,
 To lead the outset of the attacking host.
 You know what great importance is attached,
 The opportunity with keenness watched,
 To striking first the most effective blow
 On centre of the all-reliant foe ;
 The greatest captains both on land and sea,
 Have made good use of this said strategy ;
 While England's Nelson oft in deep blue water,
 In this way made the enemy cry quarter ;
 The Meteor of Corsica, we know,
 Would maze or daze the wide extended foe—
 Swift, as the angry thunder from above,
 Fall on the wavering line whose ranks he clove.
 Important though as these manœuvres are,
 They may bring risk in carrying on the war ;
 Say that the foe is all divided, broke,
 At centre of the line, by one bold stroke
 All foiled and hurt, disorder in his ranks,
 He yet may rally and attack your flanks ;
 Then, if your column any weakness show,
 Your strategy may prove your overthrow.
 For this prescribed advance in our new force,
 It is intended always to make choice
 Of troops adapted well to stand their ground,
 Though hail of shot or shell are falling round ;
 By hundreds they'll be ready to enlist
 From that large class third mentioned in our list.

XV.

A thousand times, emphatic, with much stress,
 Has been declared from platform and the press,
 How girls, who work in cotton, wool or shoddy,
 Can not together keep the soul and body ;
 Here, sir, is the material that we need

To place in the front rank and take the lead.
 Grant what these oracles have said as true,
 Then is it plain as four's the square of two,
 That either moiety will suit our case,
 Exactly fitted for the dangerous place.
 For the material part, 'twas made appear,
 And needs but just a bare allusion here,
 How few its chances are of being hurt
 By any storm or hail of shell and shot;
 Then, for the other immaterial half,
 There is authority in its behalf;
 That mortal man, whatever his intentions,
 It may defy, and all his fell inventions.

XVI.

A subject now, of import not a little,
 'Tis here in order to discuss and settle;
 Decision, very difficult to render,
 To make it pleasing to the female gender;
 The business, sir, is neither more nor less
 Than ordering of the uniform or dress.
 Mature deliberation and much thought,
 Have wrought out the conclusion that we ought,
 On this grave question, to allow the force
 To settle the affair by its own choice;
 We'll but intrude a little to suggest
 The colours, that we think will be the best.
 All those who are inclined to Albion's hues
 Can take their choice of various shades of blues;
 For Erin's daughters we'll insert the green,
 No fairer tint in nature's face is seen;
 And those who love old France's stainless white,
 May see the lily's colour in full sight.
 But Scotia's maidens must not be left out,
 Their sires were never backward in the rout;
 Though mentione'd last, 'tis no intended slight,
 Their forbears ever foremost in the fight.

For these the various tartans we'll display,
 Ignoring gaudy, while appearing gay.
 The emblematic hues we here describe
 As representing nation, clan, or tribe,
 Shall be displayed on one clear common ground,
 The *best agreeing* colour to be found.
 For further ornament, a wreath entwined,
 Of flowers, with a well known plant combined,
 Shall be encircled on the lion's neck,
 'Twill not the least impede him in attack.
 The rose of beauty, and the thistle stern,
 From Scotia's land of mountain, rock and bourne,
 With shamrocks of old Erin ever green,
 And lilies, in one garland shall be seen.

XVII.

The next, a very nice point to decide,
 Is on the mode in which our troops shall ride.
 With confidence, we trust to be absolved,
 From slightest wish to be the least involved
 In matters, too recondite for our powers,
 Or any business that is none of ours ;
 The question that's to be decided here,
 Is for side saddle or *en cavalier* ;
 And while we know that many will defend
 The former mode, and for its use contend—
 If skill and ease in riding be the test,
 We now submit the latter will be best ;
 Though some may still a different verdict render,
 And bar the subject 'gainst the whole male gender.
 The mode of equitation that we choose,
 Has much to recommend it to our use ;
 And first, with proper deference we submit
 The saddle masculine has the firmer seat ;
 Again, the left hand has a better chance
 To guide the steed when ordered to advance ;
 And all experienced horsemen will agree,

The right hand for defence will be more free ;
 Also, when any of our squadrons fair
 Shall meet the enemy in line or square,
 The flashing eye shall strike him fair in front—
 A stroke, all telling in the battle's brunt.

With these considerations in its favor,
 We trust our fair troops will decide, not waver,
 In their adoption of the plan proposed,
 That the vexed question may be settled, closed.
 Besides, the method that we advocate,
 Has the advantage of more ancient date,*
 Our old time grandams never rode side-saddle,
 And felt no shame to mount a horse astraddle ;
 Then last, not least, our ladies wo'nt forget
 The most important matter mentioned yet ;
 They'll gain what all the sex has long desired,
 A goal towards which all women have aspired ;
 A prize more valuable than titles, riches,
 The undisputed right to wear the breeches.

XVIII.

From our last stanza, that is towards the end,
 If what is said be true (we know it can't offend)
 The settlement appointing the commands,
 Will prove of great concern to our fair friends.

Ill fortune dodge the man would dare to write—
 His work shall never prosper, day or night—
 That nature's wondrous, comprehensive plan
 Makes woman of a lower state than man ;
 Grant Heaven's bounty equally bestowed,
 That both alike in whole have been endowed ;
 The gifts of each may hold a diverse course,

*The side-saddle is understood to have been introduced into England in the reign of Richard II. "Queen Anne, wife of that monarch taught the English women to ride on the side-saddle, when, as heretofore, they rid astride."—Remains concerning Britain, 1614.

While equal in the full amount of force ;
In feeling, fancy too, by nature's plan,
The woman may be more endued than man ;
While he in turn, here ladies no offence,
May gain a little in some other sense.
With proper deference to the better halves,
And no way arrogating to ourselves,
We think the bearded half of the creation
May be best fitted for the leader's station ;
'Tis therefore, sir, proposed for your approval,
Subject, of course, to your control, removal,
The post of colonel and the chief commander,
Be filled by members of the virile gender.
'Tis also patent to the simplest mind,
And plain to every biped not quite blind,
To ensure the proper working of our plan
These chiefs must all be *thorough married men*.

Admitting that 'tis possible to find
Some ladies masculine of heart and mind,
Endowed with strength beyond the common rule,
Adapted to command, direct control ;
Yet 'tis no base reflection on the sex—
Their equanimity we would not vex—
To say that in some trifling thing we fear,
That in the field a weak point might appear ;
Her toilet even, so momentous is,
She might forget to order up supplies ;
Howe'er refined a woman's appetite,
'Tis certain, unless fed she could not fight.
One other item we may mention—time,
In war of great importance sometimes prime ;
'Tis not intended to enumerate
The occasions when a lady is too late,
The consequence of lapse in this we know,
It need not be enlarged upon just now ;
The Iron Duke himself in his last field,
Had cause to feel the truth of what's here held

A different chapter had been writ of Waterloo,
Had not Von Blucher promptly* sent on Von Bulow.

XIX.

Assume the roll complete, ten thousand strong,
Of comely maidens mixed with widows young ;
Equipped by regiments, two or three brigades—
Material substances, ethereal shades—
The whole, a true embodiment of force,
Surpassing far our present man and horse,
A match for old King Fritz' big grenadiers,
Or even great Napoleon's cuirassiers.
The trumpets sound the charge, forward they rush,
At one rude shock the opposing host to crush ;
Swift as the greyhound from the leash set free,
They cross the plain direct as wings the bee ;
No thundering sound is heard their tread beneath,
Onward, all silent as the shaft of death,
They near the foe, no clang of steel is heard ;
The latter, panic stricken as a herd,
Have turned their backs, all in confusion fled ;
The stoutest dare not face the lion's head.

Thus far at present, sir, of our suggestion,
Much still is left unsaid upon the question ;
Should you and our fair friends approve the plan,
With your permission, sir, we'll write again.

NOTE.—Of the three pieces contained in this pamphlet the foregoing was the last written. The author feels bound to state in justice to himself, that want of time and unfavourable circumstances have prevented him from carrying out in full his original design. He hopes to have an opportunity, sooner or later, of republishing the piece in a revised and improved form.

*The author here writes from memory, having no history of the times at hand. If correct it was known to the French as early as five o'clock on the eighteenth that the Prussian advance under Bulow, some 15,000 men, were not far off.

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PARSIMONY AND PINE PLANKS.

Dedicated to the County Council of ———.

The full Council assembled about half past ten,
When the warden was seated and mending his pen;
With a laudable thrift he chose quills for his use,
Got his pens and his dinner both off the same goose.

The first work taken up when routine was dispatched,
Was a long looked for fledgling the Council had hatched,
A proposal for sidewalks throughout a rough road,
To be made of red pine all well seasoned and good.

Of the need of the measure there could be no doubt;
The main question was this, "would the funds bear them out;"
Which all led to much talk of the width of the planks,
Of the filling of holes, and the levelling of banks.

Every man in the county who rode on shank's mare,
And the owners of horses and carts a fair share,
Had petitioned the Council to have the work done;
The improvement no doubt 'twas high time should go on.

Mister A. then uprose and proposed that four feet,
Be the width of sound plank, free of knots, trim and neat.
Mister A. was a man of broad, liberal views,
And maintained that this plank was the right size to use.

But to this was objected at once the expense,
'Twas absurd, past all reason, beyond common sense;
Such extravagance no county funds could support,
The whole people would rise, cut their work and plank short.

Next in turn Mister B., quite a moderate man,
Or a trimmer, may be, on Lord Halifax's plan;
In the fear the whole scheme might incur a defeat,
Would a compromise take, would accept of two feet.

To these terms a majority would have agreed,
But the next speaker, C., not an inch would exceed,
Of the standard once fixed in his mind for the work—
Just twelve inches, one foot, lineal measure, the mark.

In the Council this member had very great weight,
And was wealthy to boot, held much landed estate ;
As a speaker, was sure of commanding a hearing,
Though his policy often was known as "cheese paring."

While in bodily strength he was no way robust,
He had much perseverance in which to put trust ;
Though a Tory in principle, when he thought fit,
He would hold to his views and show plenty of grit.

As thus, addressing first the chair,
Then looking round with frowning stare ;
Extending next his dexter hand,
He spake in terms of reprimand :—
"Full twenty years have I sat here,
But never thought to live to hear
Expressed so little due regard,
For interests you are sent to guard.
Some members I have heard to-day,
I very much regret to say,
Appear to view the county treasure
As if exhaustless, had no measure.
If you to-day make this award,
Next year you'll feel the taxes hard.
Besides, I hold the work's not needed
More than Lake Erie to be weeded.
Large numbers of our folk, thank God,
Can keep a horse upon the road ;
While as for those who go on foot,
It seems to me there is no doubt,
That if the said plank be laid down,
Few passengers will walk thereon,
The soft, cool turf through summer heat
Is better far for human feet ;
And when the snows of winter fall,
They'll cover plank and turf and all.
What's that you say ? for ladies feet,
'Twill be so smooth, and dry, and neat ;
Don't vex yourselves, dear sirs, about it,
Our fair friends can do well without it.
The ladies of the present day,
I own I'm very proud to say,
Are not of such a fragile form,
As for a trifle to take harm."

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But here the speaker's clear, shrill voice
Was interrupted by a noise ;
At first a titter, then a laugh ;
But that was not so bad by half,
As one deep sigh, almost a groan,
From one arch wag in mocking tone.
No doubt 'twas in bad taste to laugh,
But then the speaker's better half,
Though known for grace and much good nature,
Was somewhat masculine of stature ;
Could rate her spouse in wrathful measure,
Whene'er his views opposed her pleasure ;
Too well he understood the verse,
" The grey mare is the better horse."
All this was to the Council known,
And through the county up and down.
But brief, this member gained the day,
The Council wished to get away :
'Twas near the dinner hour, and sound digestion.
Does sometimes urge men to a prompt decision.

It was late in the autumn or fall (a cold air)
Mister C. had some plans in the town to prepare,
The cool turf, that he lauded so highly before
The full Council, was gone, or at least covered o'er.

Heavy rains had converted the rods to a bog.
It was hard work to get a stout horse to a jog ;
And the sides of the road were no refuge for tramps,
For indeed they were mostly no better than swamps.

But our friend in his gig being wrapped snug and warm,
In due time reached the town without coming to harm,
Where his business he settled, made straight, no mishap,
Then to dinner in comfort, next ten minutes nap.

It had been his intention on leaving his home,
To be back ere the night fell in darkness or gloom ;
But the day was a gala day through the whole town,
And besides, an important election was on.

The great question before the whole county was this,
We will state it in terms very brief yet precise ;
The election all turned on the heels of men's boots,
The whole structure of which should be settled by votes.

In the county were people who, for their own use,
Had adopted the plan of no heels to their shoes ;
Their advice and persuasion to every sane man,
Was to follow exactly the very same plan.

But some others less wise, or of weak or strong nerve,
And perhaps with an eye some pet purpose to serve;
Had determined that all—they gave small reasons why—
Should wear no heels at all, or else five inches high.

* * * * *

I don't pry into gentlemen's private affairs,
Neither watch where they enter, go up or down stairs;
Nor observe when their course to the bar counter bends,
Nor make note of how often they pledge with their friends.

It is known Mister C. is a temperate man,
Though opposed to Judge Dunkin's grand five gallon plan;
Not his foes will detract from this statement one word,
And with pleasure in justice 'tis put on record.

But all rules have exceptions, 'tis human to err,
At elections one meets with his friends far and near;
What's a glass more or less, pray don't be too precise,
Even patriarchs when tempted sometimes were not wise.

Thus it was with our hero, whose cause was delayed,
By a very old friend in the tree-felling trade;
A good soul, entertaining, could sing a good song,
Or would spin you a yarn fully five fathoms long,

The two friends had not met for some twenty long years,
They had much to talk over, past hopes, present fears;
And all in good time, 'tis no wonder that both
Should revert to the scenes of the heyday of youth.

Now these thoughts of the pranks they had played in mere sport.
(The old friend had just mulled a fine cup of old port)
Caused them both to feel good, in prime fettle, ere long,
The grave councillor called on his friend for a song.

In due time he assented, and clearing his throat,
With a moderate pull at the beaker of port;
Gave a stave that he vowed (placing pipe on the shelf)
Had been written and sung by Judge Dunkin himself.

Hurrah, boys, hurrah, don't you see the millenium,
Fast and certain as fate is approaching your door;
You gas-lit bright tavern's the true pandemonium,
Close its doors, and you'll never know poverty more.
No single glass drinking,
No bright tankards clinking,
Get a barrel and quaff as your fathers of yore,
Then roll in the barrel and butt that holds three,

No single glass drinking,
 No bright tankards clinking
 The half anker of old is the gage to a T.

Your philosophers ancient have puzzled their brains,
 To lengthen life's span—make our stay here a fixture ;
 But we moderns have found with less labour and pains,
 What puzzled those fellows, their long sought elixir ;
 Prohibit all taverns,
 Grog by five gallons,

For a happy old age is the orthodox mixture.
 Then roll in the barrel and butt that holds three.

No single glass drinking,
 No bright tankards clinking,
 The half anker of old is the gage to a T.

There are short-sighted folk who complain of hard times,
 While adversity grim is perched high on their crupper ;
 Do away with small measures for liquors and wines,
 And blame not the men of the lower house or upper.

Abolish rum sellers,
 Provide you big cellars,
 The cure is more potent than John A. or Tupper ;
 Then roll in the barrel and butt that holds three.

No single glass drinking,
 No bright tankards clinking,
 Five gallons the measure exact to a T.

But time flies, and the friends, though reluctant, must part.
 Mister C. has to travel, the night has the start ;
 The neat gig is got ready, the reckoning made right,
 The two friends bid adieu, then a hearty good night.

To this hour Mister C. had enjoyed the whole day,
 As a gentleman will in his own quiet way ;
 But here fortune or luck, if you like call it fate,
 Turned against him as if she were urged by foul Hate.

At good pace he had reached near the bounds of the town.
 When the horse struck his foot 'gainst a large heap of stone ;
 To the ground he fell flat, with a noise just like thud,
 While his master rolled out of the gig in the mud.

Very promptly the latter sprang up from the dirt,
 And though bruised and half stunned, had received little hurt ;
 His chief damage, an ugly deep cut in the face,
 To his looks added nothing of beauty or grace.

But the worst of the mischief is yet to be seen,
The two shafts of the gig were both broken off clean;
While the horse had one fetlock so bruised (tender part)
That no coaxing or urging induced him to start.

It is plain Mr. C. was in no pleasant plight,
For all this he resolved to reach home the same night:
And exorbitant charges for horse flesh to balk,
He soon made up his mind, come what might he would walk.

Now of course the mulled port had by this time grown cool,
And our friend gravely thought 'twould be no breach of rule
To take something more potent ere taking the road,
So he tossed off a magnum both hot, strong and good.

'Bout a mile had he walked when he found himself on
The identical plank he would have them lay down;
Its convenience for sliding improved by hoar frost,
But to walk on our councilman swore 'twas the worst.

Mister C. was no athlete, ne'er walked a tight rope,
Still he manfully strived with his hardships to cope;
But withal ere ten furlongs were passed he fell thrice,
And his garments were soiled with the slush, mud and ice.

But the chief of his ills was a gash on the head,
And the cut being deep, pretty freely it bled;
In the last slip he made he had struck an old stump,
That impressed on the cranium a serious bump.

On regaining his feet the first word was a d——n,
For the twelve inch pine board and his own niggard plan—
“How the deuce could I ever have been such an ass,
To allow such a piece of stupidity pass.”

He stepped off from the plank, and the mire struggled through
Till at length through the gloom his own home came in view:
But as nearer he drew to the front of the house,
To the front came the question how meet his own spouse?

In the plight he then was he dare'nt meet her dear face,
And her rather sharp tongue would not mend his bad case;
She might say he had been in some rascally brawl,
And discredit his statement of mishap and fall.

He resolved then at last to go in the back door,
And get Bridget some balm on his sore head to pour;
Then ere facing the lady's sure anger and frown,
He might change his foul dress, or at least get “rubbed down.”

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Miss Bridget was fresh from the Emerald Isle,
 he had been in the country no very great while;
 as judiciously cautioned 'gainst loafers and tramps,
 and was partial by no means to any such scamps.

When the boss put his hand on the latch of the door,
 he was seated with Michael, old times talking o'er,
 ere the face showed within, all disfigured with blood,
 and the clothing all over bespattered with mud.

Is no wonder that Bridget sustained a sore fright,
 at the sight of the visitor's hideous plight;
 and indeed she declares that she could not then tell
 the intruder were burglar, or ghost, or the De'il.

In recovering her presence of mind she showed fight,
 with intention of putting the stranger to flight;
 promptly grasping the first thing to hand, a long broom,
 proved the force that resides in a muscular arm.

Master C. at this juncture attempted a parley,
 called her name and said why he had not returned early;
 in vain, he complained of her treatment so rough,
 for she knew not his voice, as his speech had grown gruff.

And to no explanation would Bridget give heed,
 as she rattled the broom handle o'er his sore head;
 then calling on Michael to come to the fore,
 they expelled the soiled councilman from his own door.

Master C. would not venture to face his dear spouse,
 and of course he kept clear of the front of the house;
 feeling tired and exhausted and somewhat forlorn,
 he retreated and slept on sweet hay in the barn.

Of the scene that took place with his lady next day,
 'tis expedient, we think, to have little to say;
 and avouching the truth of what's said as a tale,
 for the private affairs of the home draw a veil.

Our brave Bridget indeed for her blunder was blamed,
 but enjoined the whole business should never be named;
 she received a rich present, a dress of green silk,
 and for Michael, a young short horn cow in full milk.

MILL ROAD, October, 1883.

THE ORIGIN OF MAN BY EVOLUTION.

Our friend, great Darwin, in his book maintains
Man owes descent to mammals of short brains
And lengthy tail; that high and low degree,
The hind and peer have but one pedigree;
No flattering doctrine this to you or me.
In course of ages, in more recent times,
In spite of all his errors, follies, crimes—
We need not be exact about the date—
'Tis known that man rose to a higher state
And there remains for some few thousand years;
No further evolution since appears.
A problem hard, however, here occurs—
"Man is the glory of the Universe,"
And "wonder" also, thus our author says,
At least in substance, slightly changed the phrase.
All this is not denied, but who so bold
The novel, daring theory to hold,
That when the Evolution's course was run
The power had finished all it could have done;
Or that when Evolution ceased and ended
A perfect man was made not to be mended.
The knotty point or question then is this—
We state it briefly but in terms precise—
Our speculative friends are bound to show
Why Evolution did no further go;
Why the said process stopped just where it did,
Of further changes was there no more need.
Since none of all our learned friends appears
To solve these points, now patent for some years,
The reader is requested to attend
While we attempt an answer to that end;
Attempt, remember, for there is much doubt,
Complete solution can be well made out.

A full, extended, comprehensive plan
Of viewing nature's law regarding man

May show her scheme throughout the whole, is just
In all creation's list the last or first.

What time man's long tailed ancestors gave o'er
Their apish pranks, and lived in trees no more,
But walked on two feet upright on the ground,
Then for the tail no further use was found.
It had among the branches served their turn,
Assisting them to cross a stream or bourn ;
But on the sward they found it in the way,
Not having means of stowing it away.
They might of course have held it o'er the arm,
Or coiled it round the neck to keep them warm ;
But as they needed both hands in the chase,
'T would still I fear have been found out of place ;
And in hot haste, while hunting for their food,
Would have got loose and draggled in the mud.
'Tis true, like modern princess with her train,
A youngster could have borne it—all in vain—
The stronger biped being more swift of foot,
The manikin would fail in the pursuit ;
We therefore find in after generations,
This ornament was dropped among the fashions.

Above 'tis said that nature's scheme is just,
A statement we shall here make clear I trust ;
For if our theorists are to be believed,
Nor by much wit and learning self deceived ;
When man's post-pendent ornament was lost,
At time he ceased to mount the trees and roost,
He was, with other gifts forthwith endowed,
That much distinguished him among the crowd ;
In short, the loss was balanced by this gain—
No other than enlargement of the brain.

As all our ancestors their tails cast loose,
When it was found they were no further use,
So reason teaches in our present case,
To look for further changes to take place,
In the endowments of the race to-day—
We now proceed to indicate the way.

Grant your attention and observe the change
That time has worked throughout the earth's wide range ;
Mark well those modern giants begot of steam,
The broad earth racing like Cyclopean team ;
Or that iron iron-ribbed leviathan that ploughs the deep,
In calm, or thorough storm, o'er waves as hill sides steep.
Then nearer home with things more common place,
What ease of locomotion is the case ;

Just step outside the door and in the street,
 You have no further use for your two feet ;
 The all accommodating tramway car,
 Conveys you without labour everywhere ;
 And even in the hostel or the store,
 You're all whipped up aloft like sacks of flour.

With all these wondrous aids to locomotion,
 Of which our forefathers had not a notion,
 Will man remain just what he is and was.
 Or change his nature to the altered case ?
 Are we who travel now at such high speed,
 Beating the camel or Arabian steed ;
 And that with no exertion on our part,
 Sitting at ease midst luxuries of art ;
 Shall we, I ask, continue what we are,
 Just like our ancestors who rode shank's mare ?
 Or when in haste the footpad's steps to track
 Might get a lift sometimes on Dobbin's back.

You must admit I think it seems as plain,
 As clouds when near the earth do foretell rain ;
 That, should the above improvements still proceed,
 We shortly shall have very little need
 Of aid or service from our nether branches—
 Useless as voters who have lost the franchise.

Allowing then man's lower limbs may fail,
 And shrivel or decay as did his tail ;
 What is he to receive in compensation,
 The loss to balance in fair valuation ?
 'Twill be by most admitted clear and plain,
 He needs no further increase of the brain ;
 Should the cerebrum be still more enlarged,
 And by some accident become o'er charged
 With all our learned Ologies and Isms,
 That in these latter days have bred such schisms ;
 'Tis feared, in spite of Maine law deprivation,
 And such sublime transcendent legislation ;
 The lieges all, instead of growing sober,
 Would then become "top-heavy"—"half seas over."

Again, from off the bounteous tree of knowledge
 One think we have plucked enough, fairly acknowledge,
 What should we further the same path pursue,
 Like Eden's couple we may chance to rue.

In thought, ascending from this lower world,
 Man learns the plan on which the stars are whirled ;

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Has long been well informed about the moon
 Did almost count the busy folk thereon—
 Describe their lives and general occupations,
 And when at war their posts and picket stations.

Yet more, we have opened up communication
 With furthest Limbo's dark and vast location,
 And with the inmost purgatorial station;
 To hold a confab with old Roger Bacon,
 Or seek some mathematic explanation
 From him who taught the law of gravitation—
 Or, if all that's reported you rely on,
 Can have more polished stanzas from Lord Byron;
 And darker tragedy from the same hand
 That gave us Macbeth and the witches' band.

Viewing all these achievements of man's wit
 And learning, does it not seem right and fit,
 That he should pause in scientific search,
 For fear said wit should leave him in the lurch;
 Or else, that precious casket which contains,
 That highly prized material, his brains,
 Should as above described become o'er charged—
 Then break, or crack, instead of being enlarged.

Assume the loss above portrayed occur,
 What will kind nature on the race confer?
 Is it not plain, of all sublunar things,
 That what man needs is just a pair of wings.
 Start not, dear reader, this is none of those
 Mere flights of fancy as you may suppose;
 This gift, howe'er improbable it seem,
 On calm reflection may not prove a dream.
 Boynton has shown beyond all contraversion,
 That man may swim like halibut or sturgeon;
 The case for argument, I here submit,
 Is apposite and for our purpose fit.
 To cross the Channel like a shark or porpoise,
 To man was once as foreign, strange and perverse
 As through the air and over it on high,
 In storm or calm, like wild seamew to fly;
 As said before, the only things required,
 Are just the wings; may not they be acquired?
 Shall it be said in this inventive age,
 That no one can be found who will engage,
 So simple an appliance to supply—
 Enabling us to quit the earth and fly.
 Mark well what genius has already done,

A handful of black grains of wood and stone,
Mixed and proportioned, as to science known.
The fruit of years of toil has overthrown,
And beaten tyrant and his ramparts down.

Again, observe the power and use of steam,
That to our wondering grandsires seemed a dream.
By most regarded with suspicious eye
Foreboding to the lieges danger nigh.
Then upwards, towards the clouds we onward mount,
To watch the siege, or all the foe to count ;
And farther still, exactly by this plan,
'Tis now proposed Old Boreas' realms to span.
Next, on the Sun we make a requisition,
To paint the fair or homely with precision
Of truth, not equalled yet by mortal hand,
Ev'n at a pontiff's or a king's command.
And last, our plan of gaining news outvies
All former instances, though truth's oft lost in lies.

Surely the skill that planned these wondrous things
Could manage or contrive a pair of wings.

While nature's provinces in every part
To man are generous, 'tis left to art
To lend its useful aid, to gain the full
Fruition of her work, and crown the whole.

* * * * *

Every day of the week in diurnals amusing—
Though sometimes the print has a knack of abusing—
Where you read, in bold type, of the wonderful cures
Of the ills that mankind with small patience endures ;
'Mongst the thousand inventions of these modern times,
Set forth in plain prose or extolled in small rhymes,
There is one that deserves scientific attention
By all who put faith in the theory Darwinian.
I take it for granted by habit you're trustful,
Don't like to regard what you read of as doubtful,
But what is set forth in due form in plain print,
Are inclined to believe without limit or stint,
The invention I speak of above then is this,
I forget now its name the results will suffice ;
They are stated in brief, to be no less or more,
Than to start a rich crop on old heads hind and fore ;
And doubtless the man who discovered the secret
Is ready on oath both to prove and confirm it.
Since the truth of the system its author declares,
Where's the difference I wonder, 'twixt feathers and hairs.
It may not be so great as appears at first look, how so.

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And my theory's sustained by a very old book,
 Any reference to which some may deem misplaced here,
 But I open its page with due reverence (not fear).
 You will read of a king whose dominions were great,
 One that lived in much splendour, supported great state;
 But like some you all know in our own modern times,
 Was brought down in his follies, his errors and crimes;
 Was expelled, driven forth, from the presence of men,
 Even herded with beasts of the field or the pen,
 Till in time, by exposure to rain in all weathers,
 All the hair of his flesh became changed into feathers.

* * * * *

If the forenamed invention produce richest curls,
 On the pates of bald bipeds, old ladies or churls;
 Why should not the same application be tried
 On the shoulders, for instance, both east and west side;
 The said parts must be bare to the sun, wind and rain,
 Do not wince if this treatment cause some little pain;
 It will not be for long; note the highlander's shanks,
 As he tramps through the heather, o'er hill sides and banks;
 The fair cuticle hardens; in time the rough hair
 Grows as thick as you see on the foal of a mare.
 If this climate don't answer just try the Red River—
 It is only in fancy you feel yourselves shiver—
 Just try it, and sure as John A. is a wizard,
 You'll find that a thorough good Nor-nor-West blizzard,
 Is complete as a charm in promoting the crop
 Of the healthy young feathers you'll see springing up;
 Persevere, we all know what that virtue oft brings—
 Your reward shall be seen in a fine pair of wings.

When Darwin, with his grand philosophie,
 Provides these feathered helps for you and me,
 And all and singular every he and she,
 Then his and our opinions may agree.



ERRATA.—In stanza VIII., page 10, in line next last, read
"politics" instead of "politic." In stanza IX, line
omit the third word "you."

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K, line